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CENTRAL INTELLIGENCE AGENCY  
OFFICE OF NATIONAL ESTIMATES

17 February 1964

STAFF MEMORANDUM NO. 12-64 (Internal ONE Working Paper --  
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SUBJECT: Divisions within the Western Alliance

SUMMARY

One or more of the NATO members are at odds with the others on almost every major issue facing the Western Alliance. Some of this disarray can be laid squarely to de Gaulle, but more of it is the natural result of the growing strength, prosperity, and confidence of West European states over the past decade, and the changing character of the Sino-Soviet Bloc and the East-West relationships.

Little can be done to induce de Gaulle to cooperate with US policies. Although most other European leaders will continue to subscribe to general US objectives, they too will feel increasingly able to press their own national or area self-interests. They hope that the US will accept the view that circumstances no longer require, or even permit, the kind of unchallenged American authority over a tight Alliance which was called for in earlier periods of the Cold War. We believe that such feelings on the part of Europeans cannot be checked unless something occurs to resurrect fears of a critical and direct Soviet threat to their safety.

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## DISCUSSION

1. There is scarcely an issue on which one or more major members of the Alliance are not at odds with the others. Differences have arisen over the organization of NATO and NATO strategic planning, over nuclear questions, over Britain's relationship with the EEC countries, over trade with Cuba, and over credit policy vis-a-vis the USSR. There are also differences on lesser issues, such as US-Common Market tariff negotiations, and US efforts to maintain a high level of farm exports to Europe. Special animosities have arisen over Cyprus and other localized problems.

2. To be sure, differences of outlook have existed on one issue or another throughout most of the life of the Alliance. The US in particular has been at odds with a series of individual countries on colonial matters and has been persistently criticized by some for its unbending policies toward Communist China. The Alliance has had to cope not only with chronic shortfalls in the contributions of its European members to NATO defense but with major shocks such as those caused by French refusal to ratify the European Defense Community proposal in 1954 and the Suez crisis of 1956.

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3. Many of the more recent fissures in the Alliance can be attributed to the personal policies of Charles de Gaulle, and as other issues arise in the future, de Gaulle may frequently take the lead in bringing them into the open. He probably will consciously try to take initiatives with anti-US overtones, since hostility to the US and the "Anglo-Saxons" is not only one of the forces which motivate him, but serves to demonstrate most clearly the reality of his independence. On the other hand, while de Gaulle can exacerbate the difficulties which have arisen and will arise again in the Alliance, he is not the cause of many of them. (It should also be recognized at this point that de Gaulle presumably would in the future, as he has in the past -- e.g., Cuba 1962 -- stand with the United States in any major and clear-cut East-West confrontation.) His removal from the scene would alleviate some of our Alliance difficulties and would make others less visible, but would by no means eliminate the majority of them.

4. The divisions in the West are attributable more to long-term developments which have been coming to fruition ever since the war than to de Gaulle or any other individual. The ties binding Western Europe to the United States (as well as the

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ties between Moscow and its principal allies) have simply become much looser than they were ten or fifteen years ago. This results in a situation -- historically more normal for most of the 19th and 20th centuries than the two-power domination of the recent past -- in which a number of middle-sized as well as large powers exert independent and often conflicting influences on world affairs. Although Washington and Moscow are still in many cases able to limit or channel in acceptable directions the tendencies among their allies toward independence, they cannot control them fully or on all occasions.

5. In the West, this phenomenon is in part the measure of the success of our postwar policy of helping our allies get back their strength and prosperity. As Europeans have become economically less dependent on the US, they have, naturally enough, become increasingly restive over some of the long-established policies and organizational mechanisms of the Alliance, which, in their eyes, reflect the earlier predominance of the US. They have also begun to move away from a preoccupation with continental affairs and to take more interest in reestablishing commercial and political ties in other areas. In this connection, rivalry for markets in many areas of the world

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is likely to become more intense as the competitive advantages enjoyed by US industry in earlier postwar years continue to diminish.

6. The European countries' renewed strength and vigor have sometimes led to increasingly abrasive relationships with one another as well as with the US. Although the continent -- at least the Common Market Six -- may still be able gradually to move toward political union, Europe's failure so far to reach a consensus on the broad policies it wants to pursue vis-a-vis the rest of the world is itself an element in the disarray of the Western Alliance.

7. These centrifugal forces have not only grown as Europe has become stronger. They have also been allowed progressively more free play, because the glue with which the Alliance was stuck together in the first place -- the threat of military aggression against Europe from the Soviet Bloc -- has seemed to be losing its grip. The military threat may have appeared greater than it in fact was in the early 1950s; it may now be discounted by some Europeans even more than it should be. In any event, the threat has seemed to recede, and at an accelerated pace since the 1962 Cuban missile crisis. As it has done so,

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national and European interests have become more important to West Europeans.

8. There has also been a reverse twist to this trend. Perhaps because they recognize the stronger pull of national self-interest on their own actions, some Europeans have come to believe that the United States is now emphasizing its national and special interests more than formerly (e.g., balance of payments difficulties, farm exports, the Chicken War). There is some feeling, assiduously cultivated by the French, that the US is trying to use the Alliance as much to maintain its influence in Western Europe as to assure a strong defense against the Soviet Bloc.

9. In sum, there is throughout Europe less willingness than previously to subordinate national or area self-interest on specific issues to the larger goals of the Western Alliance. Although the NATO governments other than France generally still premise their foreign and defense policies on close cooperation with the US, most European leaders feel that circumstances no longer require or permit the kind of unchallenged American authority over a tight Alliance which seemed called for in earlier periods of the Cold War. We believe that the movement toward greater independence from the US cannot be stopped, or

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even slowed for very long, unless new manifestations of a major  
threat from outside resuscitate the Alliance.

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